Writing abilities

Analyze unedited writing samples, use subtest that evaluate writing fluency, grammar

Characteristics of struggling writers:

* Difficulty with ideation and syntax
* Word omissions
* Distorted word order
* Incorrect verb and pronoun usage
* Lack of correct word endings
* Difficulty with text structures that communicate logical connections and the subordination of words
* Lack transitional words
* ability to express ideas verbally but inability to convert those thoughts into written form
* inability to sustain a thought over several sentence orally or in writing
* inability to convey ideas clearly

Written expression is not a problem if the student can independently compose and write sentence that convey well organized ideas with appropriate use of vocabulary, grammar and sentence complexity, sufficient to meet the writing assignment and commensurate with abilities. Written expression is a problem if the student has difficulty converting oral language into written text to convey well organized ideas and has little awareness of writing for an audience; has difficulty formulating sentences using appropriate vocabulary, grammar and sentence complexity.

* The student needs support to improve ideas, organization and sentence fluency, to develop stronger lead sentences, conclusion and transitions. Preplanning using outlining or graphic organizers (thinking maps, inspiration, draft:builder)
* CBM Research Norms for Written Expression

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| --- | --- |
| **Grade Level** | **Words written in 3 minutes** |
| 1st | 15 |
| 2nd | 28 |
| 3rd | 37 |
| 4th | 41 |
| 5th | 49 |
| 6th | 53 |

Spelling is not a significant problem if the student’s spelling level is sufficient to meet in-class writing needs and is commensurate with abilities and is good enough to be picked up by a spell checker. Spelling is a factor in affecting writing if the student cannot quickly spell high frequency words or over relies on sounding out common words.

Handwriting effectiveness not a motor issue if it is legible to the reader and keeps reasonable pace with the age and grade of the student. A student should be able to write the alphabet and copy a sentence within the range of 1st grade 4-5 WPM, 2nd grade 6-7 WPM, 3rd grade 7-10 WPM, 4th grade 8-13 WPM, 5th grade 10-15 WMP, 6th grade 12-17 WPM, 7th grade 14-20 WPM, 8th grade 16-23 WPM. Handwriting is a problem if it is illegible to the reader/student and cannot keep pace with the student’s written expression abilities (compare with what they are able to dictate?). For struggling writers, spelling and the composition of written language are problems when the WPM rates are significantly lower during dictation and independent writing tasks, as compared to tasks involving copying or writing the alphabet.

Keyboarding effectiveness is not currently practical if the student does not retain the ability to quickly locate the keys with ease; the speed of handwriting is currently faster than the speed of keyboarding *after sufficient amount of experience and practice or if there is a high rate of keyboard errors*. Keyboarding is appropriate if handwriting is too difficult or illegible or if keyboarding speed is faster than handwriting speed and better enables the student to keep pace with written abilities.

Role of motivation and behavior in successful writing – if writing is thought of as a chore and the student is frustrated with writing because it is difficult, keeping a journal may help relax and lose some of the anxiety about writing.

* Brainstorm ideas for topic essays and journal entries
* Write notes to friends, parents
* Record ideas on tape recorder and then transcribe them
* Use graphic organizers or outline (mind mapping)
* Collaborate with a peer over writing assignment
* use color coding to clarify parts of speech
* use software that supports creative writing
* structure activities so that students cannot fail
* breakdown writing task into small steps 1. Discuss topic, 2. Write down key word

common problems with legibility: height, size, alignment, direction, slant, spacing, closures, tremors

Written Language Rules – conventions of writing

Periods:

* at the end of declarative sentences
* after abbreviations
* after initials

Commas:

* between cities and states
* between day of the month and year
* to separate a series of words

Capitalization:

* Proper names
* Days of week
* Months
* Formal places
* Holidays